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A

LETTER

TO A

NOBLE PEER

OF THE

REALM,

About his late

SPEECH and PETITION

TO

His Majesty.

My Lord,

THo' the great esteem I have always had as well for your Lordship's Parts and Prudence, as your Father's Loyalty, inclines me to make a favourable construction of your Words and Actions; yet the late Speech and Petition publish'd under your Name, are of so strange a Nature, and so ill an Aspect to our present circumstances, that I cannot but acquaint you with my thoughts upon that unseasonable subject; where, (did I not see my Sovereign so nearly concern'd) that many do construe this to be not so much petitioning, as threatening His Sacred Majesty, I would have pass'd it over, and buried my resentments in Oblivion.

I am sorry, my Lord, you begin with so weak an observation from Histories and Records, as that many Parliaments have been unfortunate; when called at places remote from the Capital City. Did you ever observe how unfortunate have many Parliaments been, when called in this Capital City, or how many have been fortunate when elsewhere convened? Do not all Writers of the late Rebellion, observe it a great oversight in His late Majesty, not to have called His Long Parliament to York, or some other place remote from the City of London; where so many Factionous Cabals were held, and so many Pernicious Contrivances hammered, together with the Rabbles tumultuous running to Westminster-Hall, and the Common-Councils Petitioning, or rather Advising the King, (Mechanicks

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chanicks turning Politicians, and leaving their Shops and Trade, to sit at the Helm of Government) that all wise men conclude, thence came the Plague of War and Desolation upon the whole Kingdom.

But your Observation is not so weak, as your Presidents are emphatical and mysterious: You instance three unhappy Kings, and without the least ground in History, you seem to suppose the places of calling their Parliaments, the cause of their miscarriage. I am sure you know the contrary is manifest by our most authentick Monuments and Records. To popular fears and jealousies, fomented by ambitious and discontented Grandees; These, as well as other Princes in general, owed almost all their troubles, as now we do in a great proportion.

To these Henry the 2d. (by you mentioned,) owed the unnatural Broils and Distractions of his Kingdom, when they, together with Lewis King of France, incited the Son to rebel against the Father; in which they were thus far more excusable than others, that the Son was no Bastard, but the undoubted Heir of the Crown, and a titular King. These were in a great measure the chief causes of all the mischiefs and miseries of H. 3. Reign, when under the colour of redressing the peoples Grievances, they brought upon the Nation the greatest Grievance of all, an intestine Civil War for many years together; and though they loudly pretended to fight for the Liberty of the Subject, yet themselves were better than so many Tyrants, as ancient and modern Authors testifie, Baker, p. 86.

And for H. 6th. His fate was the consequence of his Grandfathers Usurpation; for, *De male Quæsitivix gaudet tertius heres.*

The people at last, weary of their change, began to open their eyes, and think it better to submit to their lawful Prince, than to a violent Usurper; Nevertheless this revolution could not be effected without a great deal of difficulty, had not a gap been opened by the ambition of wicked Statesmen, who to have the sole management of affairs to themselves, contrived the death of the Kings Brother, and only support, the good Duke of Gloucester; as now some conspire against his R. H. the better to enable themselves to dispose of the King as they please.

Thus for your Speech, but your Petition runs a little further.

In the first place, you aggravate the dangers of Popery, of which all true Protestants are sufficiently apprehensive; yet withal, My Lord, be not deceived, we know too well the Proceedings of some Persons, who are influenced, and often misled by those that hate the Name, but (as to themselves) love the practice of Arbitrary Power; that pretended to stand for the Church of England, but really advanced Faction; In fine, that would fain persuade us they love the King, though by their actions any man of sense may perceive how little they care for His Government.

You are troubled, it seems, that the next Parliament is to meet at Oxford, where (you say) neither Lords nor Commons can be in safety, but will be dayly exposed to the Swords of the Papists and their adherents. Of whom too many have crept into His Majesties Guards. Do you know, my Lord, anie such Papists now in the Guards? If you do, 'tis all our duty to our King and Countrey to have them secured: If not, 'tis a groundlesse surmise and a frivolous pretence, unfit to be mentioned by Persons of Honour. Certain it is, we have more reason to believe our Noble Petitioners inclining to Dissension, than His Majesties Guards inclined to Popery; for the latter do openly protest against all Papists, the former do zealously sollicite for the Phanaticks, endeavouring to unite them to the Church of England, not by their coming to us, but

but ours to them, we losing our Ground, and they still keeping their own. Besides, we know, the latter have often taken Tests and Oaths against the Innovations of Popery, but I could never find that the former took any against the Novelties of Schism.

If His Majestie thinks himself secure at Oxford, and doubts not to commit His Sacred Person to his Guards; what reason have you to apprehend any danger? Sure, 'tis his Majesties Death, not yours, the Papists have hitherto designed; how then can you be so apprehensive, while he is secure?

As for the Kings Evidence, I doubt not but they will chearfully endure a little inconvenience, to make an end of this execrable Plot. 'Tis an advantage most of them have, to endure the greatest hardship, which now, I am confident, they will not decline to consummate the great work they have so well begun.

My Lord, I wish as heartily as any one in England, the frequent meetings of Parliament, and the good correspondence of King and People; I am perhaps as much concerned as another, to have the Libertie of the Subject preserved inviolable. Yet, when I see those that should be preservers of this Libertie, first invade it, and endeavour to Monopolize Arbitrarie Power to themselves, I think self-preservation allows me to oppose them. 'Tis a true saying, corruptio optimi pessima, and experience tells us, That Parliaments may erre as well as Kings.

I will conclude, with a short reflection on some transactions preceding the Long Parliament, in the late Kings Reign; where it is observable, that his Majestie finding his Parliaments still retrograde, and bent rather to foment than compose the differences of the Kingdom, in September 40. He summon'd the great Council of His Peers, to consult about the weightie Affairs of the Nation: But this (saith a late Historian) was not very well lik'd by those who favour'd the Scots, whose chief Designe aim'd at the calling of a Parliament, which they fear'd the meeting of the Peers might prevent. Wherefore the Earls of Bedford, Hertford, Essex, Warwick, Mouldgrave, Bullingbrook and Bristol, the Lords Say, Brook, Paget, Mandavile, and the Lord Edward Howard presented a Petition to the King, representing many great Distempers and Dangers, threatening the Church and State, and His Royal Person; as sundry Innovations in matters of Religion; Increase of Popery, by employing Papists in places of Trust; The great mischief that might ensue, if the Forces rais'd in Ireland should be brought into England, &c. For remedy whereof, they pray, that a Parliament might be summon'd, to redress these grievances, and punish the Authors; and likewise to compose the War with Scotland without Blood, and unite both Kingdoms against the common Enemy of the Reformed Religion.

And this was seconded by another Petition of the Common Council of London, to the same effect, see Baker, p. 470.

These, my Lord, were as fair pretences, and as plausible inducements, to have a Parliament then called, as any can offer at present; and yet the world knows what pernicious Designs were then a hatching against the King and Government, by those verie persons that promoted that Petition; and happier were His Majestie, had he rejected their importunity. To every thing there is a season, saith the wise Man; and without doubt, there is a season for Petitioning. 'Tis certainly our duty, with all humility, to beg of our Sovereign what we think necessarie or convenient for the publick good; yet for to press him to it, when he declares against it for good reasons, (as we ought to suppose) is a very great presumption, not to be endured in a Subject. If the Laws have settled in the King the absolute power of calling, adjourn-

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ing, proroguing and dissolving his Parliament, when, and where he pleases, shall we be wiser than the Laws, and limit our Princes Will?

Besides, when discontented Statesmen are found the promoters of such Petitions, 'tis natural to suspect they do it for some sinister Design, Timeo Danaos & dona ferentes. If the great Politician Achitophel hang'd himself through discontent, because his Counsel was not followed, we cannot in prudence but think others will leave no stone unremoved to satisfy their passion. There are some Weathercocks in the World, who had a hand in all the Revolutions of their time, modo harum, modo illarum partium, but never faithful to any; If your Lordship be so far overseen as to join with these, they will undoubtedly leave you in the lurch, when 'tis too late to repent. Therefore in time consider the Wise mans advice: My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change; for their calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruine of them both? Prov. 24. 21.

I am,

Your Lordships real well-wisher,
and humble Servant,

L. S.